

DO NO MURDER.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER VI.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

You Shall not Kill.

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I. - ON MURDER.

304. *The Murder of Abel.* -

You all remember, I am sure, my little friends, the story of Cain and Abel who were the two first children of Adam and Eve They ought to have loved and cherished each other, as brothers, and so Abel did, although he was the youngest of the two of them; but Cain, jealous of seeing his young brother wiser, more virtuous, more pleasing to God than himself, conceived an envy against him which degenerated into a violent hatred. And, as our passions carry us to the last excesses, when we do not repress them, this unhappy man formed the horrible project of killing his brother. One day, then, approaching him with an air of hypocritical mildness, he invited him out for a walk in the fields; but, no sooner had they reached a place where no one could see them than he threw himself upon him and brutally struck him with a knotty stick or the branch of a tree. The innocent Abel, a model of sweetness and goodness,

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doubtless forgave his brother this abominable crime, but God did not forgive it until Cain would come to genuinely repent of it. Some time after, He appeared to the murderer, and asked him:

- "Cain, where is your brother Abel?" - "I know nothing of him," the wretch shortly replied; "am I my brother's keeper?"

- "What have you done with your brother?" added the Lord; "you have killed him, you have shed his blood upon the ground, and that blood cries to heaven for vengeance. Cursed shall you be, a wanderer and a vagabond on the earth." This terrible threat was fulfilled to the letter, and for several hundreds of years that Cain lived after, he was made to suffer the frightful consequences of his crime. It is even thought that he was killed in his turn by Lamech, one of his grandsons, who took him for a wild beast, and unknowingly shot him with an arrow.

- *Genesis*, Chap. IV.

305. *The Accusing Birds.* -

Murder is so great a crime, dear friends, that God almost always ordains it so that the wretches who commit it are discovered and punished, even in this life. There are some curious stories told on that subject; here is a very extraordinary one. St. Meinrad was a young lord of Suabia (or Swabia), in Germany; in the flower of his years he left his illustrious family, to commune with God in solitude. The night often surprised him attentively reading the Sacred Scriptures, an old manuscript copy with golden clasps which had come down to him from his fathers; often, too, he meditated on the virtues, the holiness, the goodness, and the miracles of the

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Blessed Virgin. He made his vows in the Abbey of Reichenau, situated in the duchy of Baden, and he afterwards left it to take up his abode in a little hermitage, on the summit of Mount Etzel. There he spent seven years; but the good odour of his virtues reached the depth of the valleys. At first, shepherds and woodcutters came to him, then lords, then noble ladies, then, at last, a multitude of people. This homage was a torment to the holy hermit, who loved only meditation, humility, and the solitude of the woods. Hence it was that he secretly quitted his hermitage, taking nothing with him but the statue of the Blessed Virgin, the only ornament of his little chapel, and took refuge in Switzerland, in a forest of the Canton of Schwitz, which bore the characteristic name of the Black or Dark Forest. He there spent peaceful and happy days, and would have reached a good old age, if he had not been murdered at the end of thirty-two years by robbers, with whom he had had the charity to share the limpid water of his spring, and the wild fruits of his forest. But God did not permit this atrocious crime to remain unknown. The murderers had been seen by no one, but they were betrayed by two crows, who harassed them continually even in Zurich, the nearest city. They followed them everywhere with incredible fury; they penetrated even into the city, made their way through the windows of the inn where the murderers had taken refuge, and never left them till they were arrested. The ruffians then confessed their crime, and

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suffered the extreme penalty of the law. In memory of this singular event, which took place in the year 861, the Abbey of Reichenau, of whose community St. Meinrad had been a member, placed the figure of two crows in its coat of arms and on its seal.

- BOLLANDISTS, - *Acts of the Saints*, 21st January.

306. *The Kick of a Brutal Son.* -

Speaking of the bad treatment which the Fifth Commandment forbids to our neighbour, do not forget, dear children, that the sin would be still greater, if that bad treatment were given to parents or superiors. I have just thought of a very interesting story on this subject.

A hermit of the Grand Duchy of Baden, in Germany, if I am not mistaken, was busy one day gathering herbs in a forest. All at once he hears piteous cries; he runs in the direction of the sounds, and finds lying near a bush, a poor young man who was grievously wounded in the right foot. The hermit raises him up, drags him with much difficulty to his cabin, and dresses his wound. The young man afterwards told him his story: "I have been a short time in the service of a rich lord; yesterday, we were riding through the forest where you found me, when my master discovered that he had lost a bag of silver, which he had fastened to his steed; we stop immediately, and I retrace my steps to seek it; but not having found it, I return to my master who was waiting for me in great wrath. He was so angry that he accused me of having the bag, and hidden it in the bushes so as to secure it afterwards. In vain

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did I declare my innocence, he would not believe me; he even drew his sword and gave me a random blow, that wounded me in the right foot and made me fall to the ground. As for him, he fled with all speed, leaving me in the state in which you found me." - "Your story has interested me," said the hermit, "but I pity your fate, because I see you suffer *innocently*." This last word *innocently*, instead of consoling the wounded man, appeared to distress him greatly; he sighed deeply, then burst into tears, his face betraying some strange emotion. "Alas, father, you are wrong in saying that I suffer innocently, for I deserve what has come upon

me. Listen to what I am about to tell you. My good mother is still living, and I wish I could see her again, for I am her only son. . But what a crime I have committed in her regard! One day we were both riding in a wagon to a neighbouring village. On the way we happened to dispute about some trifling matter; I dared to rebel against her, and even carried my fury so far as to throw her out of the wagon with a kick. My poor mother threatened then to give me up to justice, and I, in order to avoid the fate that awaited me, took flight, and crossed the frontier into a foreign country. Then it was that I entered the service of the nobleman before mentioned, and met with my accident. See now, father, how God punishes me: the foot that is wounded is the very one with which I dared to kick my poor mother!" His story ended, the young man asked the hermit to hear his confession; the

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man of God healed his body and his soul at once, and, some days after, the penitent son went to throw himself into the arms of his mother, who forgave him with all her heart.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 267.

307. *The Skull of a Murdered Man.* -

It is very rare my dear friends, that God leaves concealed the authors of a murder, which is one of the greatest crimes that can be committed in society. There are stories of this kind related that are almost incredible. Here is one that I did not read in books; it was told me by a person who had it from an eye-witness. It was about the year 1825. They were preparing to inter a dead body in the cemetery of Mont Parnasse at Paris. The grave-digger had made the grave, and, as is usual with men who dig the earth, he rested himself standing, leaning on the handle of his spade. All at once, thinking of nothing in particular, he sees, amongst the bones he had taken from the grave, a human skull that seemed to roll about. He paid no great attention to it at first, but at last he perceived that the skull was moving, by little jumps, as it were, over the earth just turned up. That surprises him; he approaches, takes up the skull, and begins to examine it more closely. What was his surprise, to see issue from it an enormous toad, which was lodged in it, and in seeking to escape made the skull move. The grave-digger, laughing, was going to throw down the fleshless head, when he perceived beside the left temple a little rust. He examines again, and sees

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very distinctly the end of a knife-blade that had broken in the skull. Very much astonished, he begins to reflect, and endeavours to remember who was the individual that was buried there some years before. As he had been a long time attached to the cemetery of Mont Parnasse, he remembered that, nearly fifteen years before, there was buried there a man found dead in his bed, and whose murderer had never been discovered. He immediately takes the head, runs with it to the crown lawyer, relates how he came to find it, and what he had heard of the man's mysterious death. The police take the rusty piece of blade from out the skull, go to the house formerly inhabited by the dead man, make a general search, and at length find the old broken knife, to which this piece just fitted; the children of the deceased were interrogated, and, after much investigation, it was discovered that the eldest son of the unfortunate victim had been the perpetrator of the crime. He confessed it himself, and received the punishment he deserved, as laid down by the law.

- G. S. G.

308. *Assassins in the Cathedral of Imola.* -

Apropos to murder, dear children, I will tell you of one that was accompanied by circumstances extremely glorious for Pope Pius IX., at the time he was cardinal archbishop of Imola in Italy. It was the season of the carnival, just before Lent; according to the pious custom of the Church, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the Cathedral. The venerable pontiff was praying before the Sacred Host, deposited in a subterraneous chapel. All at

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once, piteous cries were heard in the church above; he goes up in all haste, and perceives an unfortunate man who had been stabbed with a poignard (or sword), and had fallen exhausted at the foot of a pillar. The cardinal approaches him, interrogates him, raises him gently, and sets about examining his wound. At this moment some furious men rush into the church yelling and shouting! It is the murderers seeking their victim to finish him. The holy Pontiff understands their horrible design; he gently places the wounded man on the ground, advances to meet the assassins and addresses them in these energetic words: "How wretches! You have the audacity to pursue your victim even to the foot of the altar of the living God! Is it not enough to have murdered him? Would you even drink his blood?" At sight of their charitable archbishop, the assassins were frightened and fled precipitately. For him, he returns to his patient, takes him on his knee and sends for a physician, who dresses his wound, announcing, however, that he has not many moments to live. The cardinal hears his confession, gives him absolution, and soon after receives his last sigh.

It was also by his directions, and at his expense, that the last rites were next day rendered to him in a glorious funeral ceremony. Admirable instance of Christian charity, thousands of which are found in the history of the Church - and her pontiffs.

- *Daily Rewards*, No. 101, p. 4.

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CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

II. - DUELLING AND SUICIDE

309. - *The Suicide's Mass.* -

One must really hate themselves, must they not, children, to put themselves to death? Unfortunately many seem to do so once they have lost their use of right reason. If it were only taking away the life of the body, I could understand that somewhat; but it is at the same time casting themselves wilfully into the gulf of hell. Amongst the history of suicides, there are few that would interest you so much as the following. It is Pope Pius II who relates it in his works: A nobleman of Istria, one of the provinces of Austria, was violently tempted to kill himself; the demon of despair had long urged him to this fatal design; he had even seen himself on the very point of executing it. It came into his head, however, to speak of it to a friend of his, a learned religious. You may imagine that that pious servant of God consoled him as well as he could; he advised him to have a priest in his castle, and have Mass said every day. "With that," added he, "I answer for your salvation." The gentleman did so exactly, and completely lost sight of his sinister project. Thus the holy religious rightly advised that a consistent and persistent dedication to prayer and the Holy Mass, in accord with one's means and state in life, was the best cure for such a gross temptation. But, at the end of a year, his almoner-chaplain having been invited to celebrate Mass in a neighbouring parish, could not consequently, say Mass in the castle chapel. The lord had willingly permitted him, proposing to assist at the Mass himself; unhappily, some business having detained him at the castle, he perceived, toward noon, that he had not heard Mass, because his former temptations of suicide came back to his mind.

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Hastily mounting his horse, he rides off at full speed to try and be in time for the village Mass. But a peasant, whom he met and questioned, said to him:

- "Your lordship need be in no hurry, for Mass is over." At these words the unhappy nobleman is afflicted, and falls into despair. "*I am lost,*" he cries, "*it is over! oh! what a misfortune!*" (Now, of course, there was no reason for the nobleman to be so anxious as the good God was more than pleased with his sincere efforts to attend the Mass and would easily preserve him from the temptation of harming himself.) The peasant, astonished, asked him for an explanation, and, having heard it, he said: "Oh! if it's only that, I can give you the benefit of the Mass I have heard; only give me your cloak." This criminal bargain was made, and the nobleman continued his way. But see, dear children, what it is to jest with sacred things: on his return in the evening, our nobleman found the peasant hanging from a tree on the roadside. God had permitted that, in punishment of his cupidity, he was tempted, and, since he had committed the sin of simony in selling holy

things and had been driven not by charity for the nobleman but by greed for the nobleman's possessions, the peasant gave into the temptation to take his own life and was overcome.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 558.

310 - *Association Against Duelling.* -

One of the most barbarous customs that it is possible to see, is, unquestionably, that of duelling. It was a custom unhappily too common in France in the reign of Louis XIV. Cardinal Richelieu had endeavoured to repress that barbarous custom. Father M. Olier, pastor of St. Sulpice in Paris, and founder of the celebrated seminary of that name, undertook to destroy it, by opposing true honour to the false honour so often invoked by duellists. He formed the project of an association of gentlemen, who bound themselves by oath never to send or accept a challenge, under any circumstances

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whatsoever. At the head of this association he placed the Marquis de Fenelon, a man most favourably known in Paris and in the army. They even affected to admit, especially at the outset, only military men the most distinguished by their deeds of valour and of the highest renown. It was on the very day of Pentecost, in the year 1651, that all the associates solemnly brought to the venerable pastor of St. Sulpice the document signed by them, and conceived in these terms: "The undersigned do, by this present writing, make public and solemn declaration that they will refuse all sorts of challenges, never fight a duel for any cause whatsoever, and in every way manifest the detestation they have for duelling, etc." This celebrated act made a profound impression on the mind of the young King Louis XIV., and, throughout his entire reign, he was inflexible on this point, and granted no dispensation of that kind which would permit any of his subjects to lawfully engage in a duel.

- GUILLOIS, *Explic. du Cat.*, II., 284.

311. *Inscription on a Public Monument.* -

Nothing renders life sweeter, or more agreeable than the practice of virtue; on the contrary, weariness, disgust and despair are always the bitter fruits of vice. Do you want a proof of this, my young friends? The Abbe Reyre furnishes you with one in his *Christian Anecdotes*. In a city of the south of France, which I think was Nimes, there lived in the 18th century a rich man who had denied himself none of what is called the sweets of life; and do you know what all that had led him to? Simply to being disgusted with life.

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He was strongly tempted to kill himself, when, happening to cross the public square of the city, he perceived the inscription placed in golden letters on the front of an hospital, or some other house of charity This inscription was as follows:

**O YOU FOR WHOM EXISTENCE IS A BURDEN!
SEEK TO DO GOOD!
VIRTUE WILL MAKE YOU LOVE LIFE.**

He stops a moment, and remembers that there is in his neighbourhood a poor joiner, whose wife died a little before, leaving several small children. "I am mad," he exclaims, "to wish to die and leave my fortune to heirs who would only laugh at me! I will make a worthier use of it." He instantly hastens to the joiner's, adopts all his children, places them at a school, gives them trades, and afterwards establishes them in business, and finally has the consolation of seeing them all become excellent Christians and respectable citizens. He then confessed that he had never experienced more happiness than in occupying himself with that poor family. He lived long and lived happy.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 229.

312. *The Two Soldiers who Fight a Duel.* -

Duelling, which is sometimes glorified by people without religion, is the most absurd and brutal custom with which I am acquainted, my friends, for it always does harm, and never good. In 1805 there happened at Boulogne-sur-Mer a most edifying fact, the hero of which was the Abbe Haffreingue, one of the most respectable priests of that city. The affair was first

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published in a Protestant paper. The Abbe was ascending Mont de Postel, a short distance from Boulogne, when he saw two soldiers who appeared to be going the same way as he. He waited for them to have a chat, but they took an opposite direction.

The good priest, who suspected something, followed at a distance, and overtook the two soldiers, who, having taken off their overcoats, attacked each other furiously with their swords. Father Haffreingue darts towards them, crying out: "What a shame to see two brave men exposing their lives in such a way!" - "A Frenchman ought to know how to die," said one of them coolly.

- "That is true, but he ought to die only for his country." And, so saying, the priest takes hold of one of the sabres, and declares that he will not give it up unless they both promise, on their honour, not to continue to fight. Struck by such courage and such goodness, the two soldiers stopped, threw themselves into each other's arms, and caused their reconciler to shed tears of joy and satisfaction.

- GUILLOIS, *Explic. du Cat.*, II., 285.

313. *The Two Weeping Willows.* -

The mild word appeases anger, the harsh word excites wrath, as the Scripture itself tells us. Very often a good word, seasonably spoken, sometimes even a happy jest, reconciles two enemies, and prevents the worst consequences.

A well-known writer extricated himself from a serious embarrassment in the following way: M. Charles Hugo, a novelist of some repute, had been several times made the subject of puns, conundrums, etc.,

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in the works of Alexander Dumas junior. Tired of seeing himself thus held up to ridicule, he thought to put an end to this species of annoyance by challenging the other to fight a duel. After having read it, M. Dumas took a piece of paper, and drew upon it two champions who clove each other in twain and fell both on the ground. Underneath was read the following lines:

*Voici le resultat de ce combat fatal!
Ils se sont pardonne, mais ils se sont fait mal.*

{Which may be translated:

*Behold the result of this fatal encounter:
They forgave one another; but hurted each other sorely.}*

M. Dumas then folds the paper in the form of a circular, and sends it to his too susceptible friend. M. Hugo did not laugh, however; on the contrary he grew still more red with anger, and sent a second challenge more offensive than the first. Thereupon the witty Dumas took his pen and sketched what follows:

A landscape, in the midst of which were seen two weeping willows, shading two tombs, surrounded by an iron railing, and watered by a gardener. On the first tomb was read: **HERE LIES HUGO!** and on the second: **HERE LIES DUMAS!** a little lower were the words: **DEATH HAS RE-UNITED THEM.**

At this second epistle, M. Hugo could not help laughing.

He hastens to his friend's residence, shakes him warmly by the hand, and promises not to be vexed any more.

- HEBRARD, *Journal des bons Exemples*, III., 442.

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314. *A Good Advice Would have Saved Me!* -

Ah my young friends, if you only knew how much good a word of consolation, a word of encouragement, or a good advice, may do, you would hasten to lavish them on those whom you see overwhelmed with misery or grief. It is not I who say it, it is a poor victim whose story I am about to tell you. Last year the Paris journals mentioned that a dead body had been discovered by the police in the Seine river; it was that of a young man; he appeared to have been scarcely a night in the water. The body was placed in the Morgue, a species of hall built expressly for the reception of unknown persons found dead in the city, in order that their families may come to claim them. But before exposing the body of this unhappy young man, his pockets had been searched to see if any letters or papers could be found that would make known his name. In his pocket-book was found a little note written on purpose, and conceived in the following terms: "I am called Eugene S-. I belong to a respectable family of Poitiers. I am eighteen. I came to Paris to study law, but had the misfortune to take up with bad companions, and they have ruined me; for that reason it is that I have determined to drown myself, although I know it will plunge my family in grief. *A good advice would have saved me!*" Mark well these last words, dear friends, and profit by them.

- G. S. G.

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FIFTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

III. - ON REVENGE.

315. *Vengeance Belongs to God Alone.* -

We are never allowed to revenge ourselves, unless it be after the manner of Our Lord, that is to say, returning good for evil. This is just what was a little forgotten by a solitary of the Thebaid, who lived in the fourth century. He had received some injury, or some cutting words from one of his brethren, and the devil persuaded him not to forgive the offence, but to take his revenge in a signal manner. Before coming to this extremity, the offended solitary had the happy inspiration of going to a holy abbot, named Sisoës, who was the glory of the desert for his prudence and virtue. St. Sisoës consoled the poor solitary as well as he could, urging him to forgive his brother generously, and leave it to God to avenge the wrong done him.

All he could say was useless; the other would absolutely taste of the bitter fruits of revenge. "Well! brother, since you are determined, let us, at least, pray a little together." They knelt down; St. Sisoës collected his thoughts a moment, then said, sighing:

- "My God, give Yourself no more trouble in protecting, or assisting us, or busying Yourself with our affairs; it seems we can do very well without You, for this brother here maintains that we can revenge ourselves."

At these words, so little expected, the solitary rises, asks pardon of the Saint, 'goes to find his enemy and forgives him with all his heart.

- RUFIN, *Vie des Peres*, Book III.

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316. *Were They to Spit in Our Face.* -

It is worthy of remark, dear children, that it is only in religion people know how to bear an injury. Our Lord was the first and foremost to give us an example of this during His life and especially in His passion, and, since His time, all the Saints have done the same thing. I will remember all my life the following fact which I read in the life of St. Francis Xavier, the intrepid apostle of the Indies and Japan. One of his companions, Father Fernandez, was preaching one day in the middle of the public square of Amanguchi, in Japan, when a rude idolater, a man belonging to the very dregs of the people, approached him as if to whisper in his ear, and spat full in his face. What would we have done, dear friends, had we been in his place? What a state of anger and vexation we should have been in! As for the pious missionary, he quietly took out his handkerchief, wiped his face, and continued; his discourse, without showing the least emotion. What was the result? It was this, that all those who had been witnesses of this scene, and had been, at first, perhaps, inclined to laugh,

were filled with admiration for such an act of patience. Better even than that: one of the most learned men of the city, who was present, cried out that a religion which inspires so much virtue must be the only true one. As soon as the sermon was finished, he went to Father Fernandez, begged to be instructed, received baptism with great solemnity, and this remarkable conversion was followed by many others. All that, my

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dear children was the happy consequence of an insult borne with patience.

- BOUHOUR'S *Life of St Francis Xavier*.

317. *Saint Francis Regis Slapped in the Face.* -

You remember well, my dear friends, these words of Our Lord: "To him that strikes you on the one cheek offer also the other." Well! although it appears hard to follow this counsel, there are several Saints who practised it to the letter. I remember, amongst others, St. Francis Regis, the Apostle of the Cevennes and the Vivarais, that is to say, the Department of Ardeche and the adjoining district, in France. One Sunday, he learns that some libertines had assembled in a country inn of bad repute; that they had drunk to excess, and, in their orgies were uttering horrible blasphemies and giving themselves up to all sorts of wickedness. Without pausing to consider the danger to which he exposes himself, the holy priest goes to the place, makes his appearance amongst these wretches, and endeavours, by words of charity and reason, to restrain the course of their scandalous conduct. His exhortations were not heeded, and one of these libertines even rose from the table, and going up to him, gave him a blow in the face. Without manifesting the least emotion, St. Francis Regis turns the other cheek to him and mildly says: "I thank you very much, my dear friend, for the opinion you have of me: but, if you knew me better you would see that I deserve still more." These words, this tone of mildness, this so

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truly Christian moderation, filled the profligates with salutary confusion; they asked pardon of the Saint and immediately withdrew.

- DAUBENTON, *Life of St. Francis Regis*.

318. *Why I Rang the Bell.* -

It is a curious, I might almost say an amusing thing, to see how ingenious Saints are in doing good, or avoiding evil. I will tell you how one of them revenged himself, the blessed Peter Fourrier, (now declared a Saint), who was pastor of Mattaincourt, in the Vosges Mountains of France, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. There was in his parish a wicked man who had seduced a young female and led her into sin. A good confession made to the Saint opened the eyes of this poor woman sinner, and she was sincerely converted. Enraged at this change, which he had not the courage to imitate, her seducer discharged all his fury on the pious pastor. He waited for him one day at the church door, began to abuse him and dared to strike him with his fist. That did not last long, however, for the children, coming out from Catechism, I think it was, and venerating their pastor, attacked the insolent ruffian and quickly drove him away. Many persons ran after him, and he would have been harshly and hardly dealt with were it not for the ingenious device of the Blessed Peter. He goes to the church in all haste and begins to ring the bell as if a fire had broken out somewhere. Hearing the alarm-bell, all the people run towards the church asking what is the matter. The good pastor ascended the pulpit, relates his stratagem and winds up by

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saying: "My dear brethren, let us pray for this poor lost soul, it has much need of our prayers." In this way he kept them in church for half an hour, and his enemy had time to escape. God did not fail to reward his servant for this act of charity, so ingenious. On the following morning, the criminal came to throw himself at the feet of the pastor of Mattaincourt, made a general confession, repaired the scandal he had given, and led ever after an exemplary life.

- CHAPIA, *Life of Blessed Peter Fourrier*.

319. *How Sisters of Charity Take Revenge.* -

The year 1832 was sadly signalized in Paris by scenes of disorder, which were the effect of the unhappy revolution of 1830; but it was still more marked by the horrors of the cholera, which then made its first appearance in France. One day Sister St. Mary was going into the charity hospital, when she was rudely insulted by a working-man, who followed and abused her, and would even have struck her if some one had not prevented him. The good Sister knew only how to pardon and pray. Some days passed. In the beginning of the month of April, hundreds of cholera patients were crowded into the wards of the hospital, mingled with the dead bodies of those who daily expired. One morning, a new patient was brought in whose condition appeared desperate. "*No more room*" was the abrupt answer of the person charged with the reception of patients; "*doctors and nurses can attend no more.*" But Sister St. Mary was there; she recognized the patient, and exclaimed: "I will take

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charge of him. - I will find him a corner somewhere. Do not refuse him; I will tend him myself." She immediately enters on her task, and, without neglecting the other patients, she attends to this one with the most assiduous care. At the end of eight days the man was in a state of convalescence; but one morning, he missed from his bedside the good Sister St. Mary, his benefactress. "Alas!" he was told, "she took the cholera herself, and died during the night." In fact, my very dear friends, the good Sister died attending the wretch who had insulted her some days before: she had recognized him, and revenged herself on him after the manner of the Saints. She died on the 8th of April, 1832.

- GUILLOIS, *Nouvelle Explicit. du Cat.*, 167.

IV. - ON SCANDAL.

320. *The Soldiers of Julian the Apostate.* -

A true Christian may sometimes be mistaken, my dear friends, he may even scandalize others without meaning it; but, as soon as he perceives the scandal he has given, he makes it a duty to repair it, disavowing and condemning his error. Thus it was that several Christian soldiers comported themselves, who had been insidiously led by Julian the Apostate into his apostasy. It was customary, on certain occasions, for the emperors, seated on their throne in pompous array, to give money to the troops with their own hands. In one of those ceremonies, which took place, I think in

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Egypt, Julian had an altar placed beside him, with a brazier and incense, and each soldier was required to throw a little incense on the fire, before receiving his present. They were given to understand that it was only the renewal of an ancient custom, of no importance whatever. Most of them did not perceive the stratagem prepared for them; but, on being reproached with what they had done, they gave the liveliest proofs of repentance, ran through the streets and squares crying aloud: "We are still Christians; be it known unto all. O Jesus Christ! Our adorable Saviour, we have not renounced You! If our hand was surprised, our heart had no share in it!" They were courageous enough to go and cast the money they had received at the feet of the emperor, telling him aloud: "Reserve your gifts for those who accept them on such shameful conditions; to us, they are far more odious than death. Cut off our hands, which have been defiled, cut short the thread of our life, immolate us to Jesus Christ, our Divine Master, whom you have made us betray against our will." What a lesson, dear friends, or rather what a reproach for the apostates of our times, who, very far from repairing the scandal they have given, renew it every day by persevering in their apostasy!

- REYRE, *Anec Chret.* 26.

321. *St. Arsenus and His Pillow and Mattress.* -

Our nature is so bad, in consequence of original sin, that we are easily scandalized by the least thing. That would not happen, my dear friends, if we had a

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little more charity and virtue; often even, if we knew the motives on which others act, we should see that they have very good ones. It is in order to prove this to you that I am going to tell you the following story. St. Arsenus, before becoming a religious, had occupied a considerable position in the world, having been the preceptor and tutor of Arcadius, son of the Emperor Theodosius the Great. He had, therefore, tasted the sweets of life which are met in courts. Some time after he had embraced the religious life, he fell sick; then his superior obliged him to take care of himself; he caused a mattress and a pillow to be given to him, so that he might sleep easier. A solitary came to see St. Arsenus whilst he was in that state, and was scandalized at these little indulgences which he allowed himself. The superior perceived it, and drawing him aside, said to him: "Tell me, Brother, what were you before you entered into religion?" -- "Father, I was a shepherd, for my parents were very poor." - "Then, you did not live at your ease?" -- "Oh! no, father, I often had not even bread to eat." -- "So, you are better off, and live more comfortably since you have been a monk than when you were in the world?" -- "Certainly, Father!" -- "How! my dear Brother, and you find fault with the compassion we have had for Arsenus, who lived at court and had all the delicacies of the world at his command? You must acknowledge that it was wrong of you to be scandalized at the little exemptions which his superior has imposed upon him."

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The solitary understood his fault, and was not so rash in his judgements ever after.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 528.

322. *Duke Wenceslaus Walking in the Snow.* -

If bad example is a crime which has the most frightful consequences, good example, on the contrary, my dear friends, renders virtue sweeter and easier. Not only does it show the way, but it marks it out, and walks before it. That reminds me of a charming story, taken from the life of St. Wenceslaus, king or duke of Bohemia, who lived in the tenth century. That pious monarch, who consecrated all the day to the affairs of his kingdom, went often by night to some church in Prague, his capital, to adore the Most Holy Sacrament and satisfy his piety without failing in the duties of his state. One winter's night, he took with him a gentleman of the court, and, notwithstanding the piercing cold, he walked barefoot over the snowy ground. The gentleman, on the contrary, had taken care to wrap himself up in a furred pelisse, such as are worn in cold countries; notwithstanding all that, he could not help feeling the intense cold. The king, perceiving it, was touched with compassion, and said to him: "I perceive you are susceptible to the cold, - well! walk after me, and put your feet in the marks mine have left in the snow, and you will not be cold." He did so, and felt the cold no more. There is just what happens, when people give good example, dear friends: they render the practice of virtue

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sweeter and easier.

- DEBUSSI, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*, 172.

323. *Woe to Him that Seduced Me!* -

If it be an enormous crime to deprive one's neighbour of the life of the body, it is a much more enormous one to deprive him of that of the soul by pernicious counsels and by bad example. In the thirteenth century there lived a learned monk of the Order of St. Dominic named Thomas de Catimpre, who afterwards became suffragan bishop of Cambrai in Northern France. When he was as yet but a simple student in the University of Paris, he connected himself closely with a young man of quality, who was a model for all young people of his age, but unhappily did not know how to guard against the seductions of bad example. This young man contracted a friendship with another fellow-student, who gradually succeeded in making him as corrupt as he was himself. His virtuous friends, and, of course, Thomas was of the number, frightened at the change that was wrought in him, tried to bring him back; but neither their tears nor their prayers could make the least improvement. God spoke in his turn. One night, when this poor young man was sound asleep, he all at once woke up with a start and appeared in mortal terror. He uttered frightful cries, which soon brought every one in the house around his bed. They speak to him, question him, ask what is the matter with him; he answers

not a word, but continues the same heart-rending cries. A priest is brought, who tries, in his turn, to calm

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him, and exhorts him to put his trust in God. At last the dying man turns his terrified gaze on the priest, and gives utterance to these awful words:

"Woe to him that seduced me! In vain would I pray to God to forgive me my sins! I see hell opening under my feet!"

- "Don't say that!" cries the priest. "It is never vain to call on the mercy of the Good God." Two or three minutes after, he turns to the wall and expires in that terrible despair. Sad consequence of the bad example he had received, and the bad company he had kept.

- DEBUSSI, *Nouveau Mois de Marie*, 51.

324. *A Scandalous Sinner's Crown of Thorns.* -

Scandal is so great a sin, - on account of the disastrous consequences it may have for many years, and even for many ages, - that it cannot be too carefully repaired, dear friends, when one has had the misfortune of giving it. It is related in the *Lettres edifiantes* that a young Frenchman of eighteen years, settled at Veria, the ancient capital of Berea, in the Ottoman Empire of Turkey in Asia. He had the misfortune to renounce his religion, and become a Mohammedan follower of Islam. But his conscience left him no rest when once he understood the enormity of his crime. He goes to find a Greek priest, confesses his shameful apostasy, and publicly receives Communion. All that did not seem to him sufficient to repair the scandal he had given; his fervour and repentance made him do something more. He applied to his body sharp thorns, which entered into the flesh. Having taken thorns like those wherewith Our Lord was crowned, he plaited them into a crown, and placed it on his head. In this state he went through

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the streets of Veria, striking himself with a knotted cord, and crying out: *"I have been a vile apostate, but I have become a Christian again!"* Nor was that all. The governor of the city had him arrested, and exhorted him to desist from this folly and persevere in the religion of Mohammed, which he had embraced some days before. Threats, promises, torments, nothing, not a single thing, could now shake him. He was at last beheaded, and he crowned by a glorious martyrdom the penance he had undertaken with so much courage and energy.

- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, 185.